



Editor: David Nathan

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We Got Him!

Well, we hope you'll excuse the over-familiar headline, but here at the National Jazz Archive we couldn't resist it! Because after very many years of wishing and hoping our special guest at the National Jazz Archive Celebrity Interview 2004 will be HUMPHREY LYTTTELTON!

Finding an available date in Humph's calendar is still a challenge. For after fifty-six uninterrupted years of bandleading - a record which easily surpasses Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Count Basie and, at an intelligent guess, probably every other prominent jazz bandleader, British or American - Humph continues to forge ahead musically with undiminished enthusiasm, creativity and trumpet power. This is, in itself, an extraordinary achievement. But it becomes more so when you consider that he has somehow managed to combine this fulltime vocation with a comparably distinguished career as radio presenter, busy record producer (his 'Calligraph' label is one of the longest-established and widely respected 'indies') and for many years before that, more unflagging activities as author, journalist, and even cartoonist too. And somehow - while keeping all these separate skills in (or on) the air over the years - he has somehow managed to make the whole thing look suspiciously like fun, rather than the fulltime unrelenting vocation which, according to the simple limitations of twenty-four hours in a day, must occupy his head, hands and heart every day of every week of every year.

For all right-thinking jazzlovers in Britain Humphrey Lyttelton is acknowledged as the kingpin - the central focus - of our music. And that's been the case for many years now, as his gifts to jazz have spanned well over five decades in a whole variety of different ways. Most impressive of all - and rightly so - is his discography which has comprehensively recorded his artistic progression from early burning Revivalist days through to the swing-out 1950s years of mainstream, to the ever-entertaining - and often creatively surprising - CDs of today (by the time you read this he will have another one ready for issue featuring new Lyttelton family members including the talented young tenorist Karen Sharp). 'Family' is one way of putting it but 'school' might be another; Lyttelton's band has always welcomed new talent regardless of generation and over the years has provided a finishing-university for younger talents like Sharp and Alan Barnes as well as offering musical hospitality to his greatest contemporaries.

Creating a musical legacy is, of course, the principal raison d'être of most jazz musicians, but Humph has left - and continues to leave us - other favours. At a time when much of jazz bibliography was drenched in purple prose, his books - from a first autobiography 'I

play as I please' in June 1954 - set new and desirable standards of literacy and intelligence, from an old Etonian with a new vocation. And a series of later volumes - both autobiography or critique - continued to confirm that their author was a man of impeccable judgment, intelligence, humour and wit. Humph's broadcasting - which in more recent years has tended to deflect him from the writing-desk - has, of course, turned him into the unchallenged 'voice of British jazz'; since 1967 on BBC Radio 2's 'Best of Jazz' his old-friend tones have - like W.C. Handy's Deacon Spliven of 'Aunt Hagar's Blues' - gently pointed his listeners towards 'the way of living (or, at least, listening) right!'. Lyttelton's jazz broadcasting is quietly extraordinary and one of his most noticeably American qualities - consistently to appreciate, celebrate (and therefore publicize) what's new in jazz, as well as the best of what's past - renders him the most valuable of our radio jazz commentators. What was less predictable - at least until 1972 - was that he would become ringmaster (and, in his radio publicist's words 'reluctant Chairman') for undoubtedly the funniest panel game in British radio history: 'I'm sorry I haven't a clue', which won the Sony Gold Award for being just that in 1995 and 2002 (and may well have done so again in 2004). To all of these artistic challenges Humph has brought unfailing courage, gifts, constant flair and - dare we say it - that most elusive element of 'style'!

All of this and much more from a man who refuses to aggrandize himself (he may even have refused a knighthood, but that's another story!) and who continues to be Britain's greatest longterm jazz Ambassador. During his career he has been called on record (by his close friend, Ambassador Satch no less!) 'the top trumpet man in Britain today!' and received most of the other accolades which, as an acknowledged true star of the music, he deserves. But it will be fascinating to hear Humph, for once, talking about himself. It's not a thing he's in the habit of doing - although a fascinating BBC Production issued a few years ago on a double cassette (ask him about it on the night!) provided a long-needed and updated insight - and he isn't in the habit of either glorifying the past or even keeping scrapbooks. As with all true progressives, for Humph the best days are to come. But on Wednesday 17 November though we have him to ourselves! And I suspect that his direct lines to jazz history, British and American, will supply an unforgettable an irreplaceable evening. We do look forward to seeing you there!

Digby Fairweather
(Founder/National Jazz Archive)



Editors Note: Tickets at £10 can be obtained from me at the Archive but please check first for availability in view of the limited accommodation. In any event cheques should be made payable to Essex County Council.

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MICHAEL PARKINSON –
New Patron for NJA See inside

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Very early days *by George Webb*

The story of how the Dixielanders happened has been very well documented over the past 50 years and so I would like to explain how I was first introduced to jazz music. From a child I remember listening to my father playing and singing ragtime songs whilst rehearsing with his brother Horace – they had a double act singing harmony plus patter and during the early twenties (1922-1927) appeared on the working mens club circuit around London as semi professionals.

They also appeared at masonic functions as they had a top London agent called Reeves and Lampert who wanted to put them on full professional standing but although my father George was keen, his brother had a very good job with promotion possibilities and a family and would not be persuaded to take the chance of change. In the twenties a well paid job was security and that led to the act splitting up and from 1927 they never sang together again, so I imagine that although I was not aware of it, the seeds of jazz music could have been sown.

When I was fifteen I was employed by a firm called D M Bembaren in South Molton Street, just behind Bond Street in the west end, who made very expensive handbags cut from crocodile, lizard and especially imported brocades etc., for the “posh” as we knew them at that time, and my job was to cut out the linings from silks and moire. Working alongside was a young man aged about 20, Tom Davis and we became very good friends as he was born and lived in Camberwell Green in south east London, about a half mile from where I was born and like me keen on sport.

He supported Dulwich Hamlet probably the top amateur football club at that time and I went along occasionally with him to their games. When Christmas arrived the firm had given permission for us to organise a Christmas eve party amongst ourselves. There were about 40 girl machinists and ten men and boys who all contributed with cakes and fruit and bottles of port (I don't remember any beer!)

Tom brought along a portable record player which I believe was a Decca, in a leather case and to start a record you wound the handle that folded cleverly into the side, and apart from a couple of popular 78's of the day, he played a Louis Armstrong record with him singing and playing “You Rascal You”. This was my introduction to hot jazz and it didn't register at all with me, although Tom Davis was beside himself jumping up and down, lost in the sound coming from the portable record player. I was not impressed but I cannot remember Tom trying to convince me as to Louis' talent.

Some time later, Tom arrived back at work after lunch very excited as he had been along to the Palladium Theatre, which was only a few minutes walk from Bond Street and had purchased two tickets for a Louis Armstrong concert, and I was to be the lucky one to accompany him. He went on at length about Louis and I agreed to go along. There was tremendous coverage in the press about his first appearance in England and so by the time that we went I had become quite keen to attend out of curiosity.

We duly arrived at the Palladium, took our seats and enjoyed the atmosphere and I got very excited when Jack Johnson the world famous heavyweight boxer appeared in one of the boxes.

From what I recall when Louis Armstrong was announced it was quiet and the only sounds were coming from a band at the back of the

stage playing quite softly “Sleepy Time Down South” when suddenly this coloured man burst on to the stage, played some very high notes that sounded like pistol shots and that was followed by him shouting, “Ladies and gentlemen, I am now going to play a little number”. He then took off at a tremendous pace and I think he played “Chinatown my Chinatown”.

I can only imagine that the Palladium audience contained about twenty five per cent who were jazz enthusiasts. The vast majority were used to enjoying an evening of full Music Hall entertainment such as comics, tap dancers and ventriloquists etc. Goodness knows what they made of this but I watched and listened to Louis fascinated by the endless supply of large white handkerchiefs with which he constantly mopped his brow and face during his announcing and singing.

That was in 1932, my introduction to real jazz music. My friend Tom Davis had a wonderful evening and I left him outside the theatre to catch my tram home, whilst he went to the stage door hopeful to get Louis' autograph. (I cannot remember if he was lucky!)

Later that year I left the firm as we had moved to Belevvedere in Kent from Lewisham, south east London and as seems to happen lost touch with Tom, something I have always regretted but I kept my interest in band music listening to the late night BBC broadcasts of Harry Roy, Ambrose and Lew Stone from the Hotels where they were resident. I was now 16 years of age and had started an apprenticeship at Vickers Armstrong in Crayford and it was there that I made friends with Bill Jenner and Arthur Roberts, who were record collectors of



Photo courtesy of John Root

Armstrong, Oliver, Morton, Holiday and mainly hot jazz music by coloured performers and through them became aware of the fabulous world of jazz music on records.

We decided to start a rhythm club, The Bexleyheath and District at the Red Barn in Barnehurst just a couple of miles from where we all lived and this eventually and accidentally became the home of George Webb's Dixielanders, the catalyst of the so called jazz revival that started during the early days of 1942.

Editors Note: Thanks to George for this fascinating insight into his jazz initiation and as you will see from the **Ongar Jazz Night** review still playing regularly. He is also a Trustee of the **National Jazz Archive**.

Humphrey Lyttelton our celebrity guest in November played with George's band in 1947 and George subsequently joined Humphrey's band in September 1948 staying until June 1951.

BENEFIT NIGHT AT ONGAR JAZZ CLUB 14th MAY 2004

The Presidents evening is always a special event and the Archive was again delighted to receive a cheque for £1,000 which is much appreciated.

Digby Fairweather, the President of the club was not the main attraction this time as George Webb's Dixielanders “topped the bill”.

George on piano led a fine band comprising Mike Daniels (tpt), Charlie Connor (clt, soprano sax and vocals), John Finch (tmb), Roy James (gtr and banjo), Don Smith (bass and tuba), John Petters (dms) and guest vocalist Audrey Stokes.

The numbers they played in their first set were “Swing that Music”, “Pennies From Heaven”, “Who's Sorry Now”, “Wabash Blues”, “Princess Street Stomp”, “Cake Walking Babies from Home”, “Sleepy Time Down South”, “Mandy Make up your Mind”, “Georgia” and “Please don't Talk About Me when I'm Gone”.

This was followed by a splendid duo of Digby (tpt) and Dave Herridge (piano) playing “From Monday On”, “If I could be with you One Hour Tonight” and “Oh Baby”.

George Webb's Dixielanders then played the concluding set the numbers being “Knee Drops”, “When you're Smiling”, “There'll be Some Changes Made”, “Perdido Street Blues”, “Rosetta”, “Shine” – a great feature for Charlie Connor, “Melancholy Blues”, “Once in a While”, “Doctor Jazz” and “Smile a While”.

As ever our grateful thanks to Jean and Stan Ball and their Ongar colleagues for their splendid generosity and the terrific musicians who gave their services freely to support the event and in turn, the Archive.

David Nathan



Left to right: George Webb, Charlie Connor and Digby Fairweather. Photo courtesy of John Root.

ARCHIVAL NEWS

MICHAEL PARKINSON – NEW PATRON FOR NATIONAL JAZZ ARCHIVE

The Trustees were delighted when in June 2004 Michael Parkinson CBE agreed to become a patron of the Archive.

The distinguished interviewer, television presenter and writer is a keen lover of jazz and joins the existing patrons, Kenny Ball, John Dankworth CBE, Dame Cleo Laine OBE and the Right Hon. John Prescott MP.

He said that "Jazz is my first and everlasting love in all of music. I am delighted and honoured to become a patron of such an important organisation".



OPEN DAY - JUNE 7th 2003

Vic Lewis was the special guest and delighted the capacity crowd with highlights from his wide ranging career splendidly supported by interviewer Campbell Burnap.

He started playing aged three but got his first proper lessons from his uncle Dan on banjo – an instrument he now professes to hate along with hawaian guitars!

He started playing guitar in his teens and formed a quartet in 1934 aged 15 playing music very much in the style of the Hot Club de France. In 1935 they won a Carroll Levis discovery show which led to their touring all over England and appearing on Radio Luxemburg, Radio Normandy and the BBC.

Vic subsequently met and became friends with Django Reinhardt and Stephane Grappelli with whom he worked for a short period after the war. In fact he taught Django to sign his autograph as he was unable to write and one of his most cherished mementos is a photograph from Django signed "pour Vic". On one occasion he played Django's electric guitar in a european club whilst Django played violin – brilliantly, of course.

One of his greatest memories was going to America in 1938 as a nineteen year old, his parents having bought him a round-trip ticket on the Queen Mary for £60.

His friend Leonard Feather set up meetings for him with Joe Marsala and Bobby Hackett and, in turn, he was able to set up recording dates with them and among others, Dave Bowman, Eddie Condon, Brad Gowans, Pee Wee Russell, Zutty Singleton and George Wettling.

Campbell asked Vic as to how a nineteen year old could manage to get all these star names to record for him and without a fee – Vic replied "one word – Chutzpah!!". These recordings were reissued last year on compact disc and extracts were played.

He also met during his visit some other great musicians, including Tommy Dorsey, Charlie Spivak and Jack Teagarden but the most fascinating meeting occurred on his first day in America. Whilst looking in the window of the Famous Door club he got chatting to a young man who finding out he was a musician from England called over an older man who after talking a while invited Vic to come and see his band that night – the men concerned were Lester Young and Count Basie!!

Vic talked about his RAF service during which time he learnt to play the trombone as well. He worked with Buddy Featherstonhaugh and then co-led the Jazzmen with fellow serviceman Jack Parnell with whom he continued to work for a short time after the war.

He formed a big band in 1946 and became known as "Britain's Stan Kenton" but disbanded in 1960 when he became a booking agent and manager but did reform the band in 1984 to back Shorty Rogers and Bud Shank.

Among the many artists he represented were Shirley Bassey, Johnny Mathis, Andy Williams and the Beatles. He combined jazz with another passion, cricket, where he was on the Middlesex Cricket Club committee for twenty five years and was the USA representative on the International Cricket Conference. He even took Nat "King" Cole to Lord's and Frankie Laine to Edgbaston!

Vic worked with virtually all the greats in show business and a fascinating ninety minutes just flew by.

Digby Fairweather and friends then played superbly for an hour, the friends being Chris Hodgkins (tpt), Campbell Burnap (tmb), Martin Hathaway (alto sax), John Altman (curved soprano sax), Eddie Johnson (bass), Nevil Skrimshire (guitar) and Dave Herridge (keyboard).



Vic Lewis. Photo courtesy of Guardian Group.

DONATIONS

NEW BOOKS

Publishers/authors who have generously submitted gifts of books include:-

Kenny Ball - *Blowing my own Trumpet* – John Blake Publishing Ltd

Derek Collier - *Clarinet Marmalade* – The Life and Times of Tony Parenti – Jazzology Press

Alan Robertson - Joe Harriott – Fire in his Soul – Northway Publications

Plus a booklet "Dogging around Russia" by Dick Pearce

BOOKS, MAGAZINES, COMPACT DISCS AND MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS

The undernoted contributed many fine items:

CAMPBELL BURNAP

DOUG CARTER

EDDIE COOK

KENNETH COOK

GEOFFREY GILBERT

DAVE GIRDLER

GERALDINE GOOGE

ALAN HENDERSON

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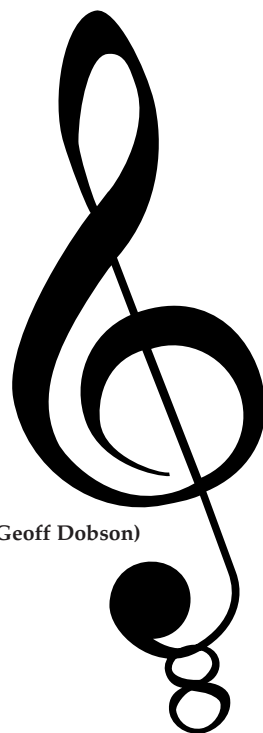
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To them and all other donors our grateful thanks



Ian Carr (left) at Open Day, 5th June 2004. A report on his excellent interview with Martin Hathaway and the musicians who played at Open Day 2004 will appear in the next newsletter. Photo courtesy of John Root



JACK PARNELL – CELEBRITY INTERVIEW

18TH NOVEMBER 2003

Jack Parnell, the great British jazz drummer and bandleader, now a sprightly 80 years old, held the capacity audience of 130 spellbound as he told some wonderful anecdotes from his long and distinguished career, ably abetted by Digby Fairweather.

He talked initially about his family background which was steeped in "showbiz" on his father's side, his dad Russ being a well known ventriloquist & his uncle Val Parnell, the famous impresario.

Classical music was the speciality on his mothers side and he learnt to play the piano at the age of five.

His love of jazz and dance band music commenced when he was taken to the music halls in the 1930's where bands such as Henry Hall, Jack Hylton and Jack Payne topped the bill, but the real highlight for him was when, aged 10 in 1933, he was taken to see Duke Ellington's orchestra at the London Palladium and watching Sonny Greer on drums was inspirational.

As a consequence he decided that he wanted to be a drummer and his dad sent him for lessons to Max Abrams - he only had six and Max, who spotted he had talent, got him his first job with Headley's Quartet in Scarborough.

It was while in the RAF during the war that his jazz playing brought him to prominence first with Buddy Featherstonhaugh's sextet and then with a small group he co-led with Vic Lewis called the JAZZMEN.

However being a great fan of Gene Krupa and Buddy Rich (who later became a great friend) he had set his sights on being a big band drummer so he jumped at the chance in 1944 of joining the newly formed Ted Heath Band staying until 1951, and through his connection with Val Parnell the famous Sunday concerts started at the London Palladium.

He then formed his own band which went into the show "Fancy Free" and commented - "When I first started conducting I didn't have a clue about it. So I went to Freddie Bretherton. He taught me everything. When it's four-four you go up, down, left and right - like a cross. When it's three-four, waltz time, you do it in triangles. On my opening night he sent me a telegram saying, "Don't forget the triangles!"

Then in 1952 he started his own big touring band and had Phil Seamen on drums who he described as "one of the greatest drummers he ever heard & the first to play in the matched grip style" which virtually all do now. A special feature was a drum duet playing identically but Jack admitted that "he was never keen on drum solos as the drummers principal function was to inspire the other musicians by being the driving force in the band." He also commented that "for every drummer who can play a good solo, there are 20 who can't."

Whilst the band was very successful, Jack could see that in the mid 1950's with rock and roll and smaller groups making their mark along with television being so popular that their days were numbered, so when he was offered the chance to become Musical Director of ATV in 1957 he jumped at it, taking most of his band with him. He used a fine definition that people "listen with their eyes" so visually the new acts were capturing the imagination being seen on television.

But he soon realised how intense the pressure was as all the shows were live in those days and in view of the diversity of the music especially classical he needed further conducting lessons this time from an old friend George Malcolm. This job lasted for 25 years and some 2,500 shows working with virtually all the great stars especially on Sunday Night At The London Palladium. He said that particular favourites to work with were Sammy Davis Jnr, Lena Horne and Barbra Streisand who he did an award winning "special" with and despite her reputation was a delight to work with and stayed on each day after rehearsals for a beer with the musicians.

Leslie Grade, the well known agent was in charge of hiring members of the orchestra and kept a very tight rein on the numbers and when Jack said he needed an oboe for a particular session, he was told by Leslie "I'm not having a tramp in our band!!" Eventually Jack tired of doing this job and decided to start playing drums again and after a 16 year layoff "found that initially he could not play at all."

Despite this, another interesting observation he made when speaking of rhythm: "Everybody has perfect time. Someone hammering in a nail will go "boom, boom, boom" in perfect time. The only thing is that when you ask somebody to do it they can't. That's the difference between you and me."

Since 1982 he has played with many great British and American musicians such as the late Ruby Braff (another great friend of his), Joe Bushkin and Bob Wilber and was a founder member of the Best of British jazz band who he played with until 1999. More recently he has conducted the Laurie Johnson London Big Band in concerts and on compact discs and also the 2001 recording "Lovers Love London" featuring music composed by another friend of his Robert

Farnon and played by the Royal Philharmonic Strings.

He is now semi-retired and thoroughly enjoys playing Bach preludes and fugues on his piano at home.

It was a privilege and pleasure to hear about such a wonderful career.

David Nathan



Jack Parnell seated in the Archive with Digby Fairweather, Councillor Wendy Cole (Chairman of the NJA Trustees) and David Nathan (Archivist)
Photos courtesy of Ashley Watts

The letter that follows appeared in the June 2004 issue of Jazz Journal International and is reproduced with their permission and serves as a timely reminder:

Where there's a will...

In his letter to Jazz Journal International (May 2004) Keith Samuel poses an important question in relation to the preservation of jazz research materials and (indirectly) the National Jazz Archive. 'How' he asks, 'can friends and relatives of the departed safeguard (their) archives, when they contain rare recordings, original research, documents, photographs and other unique memorabilia?'

There are two points here. The first centres on the existence - if any - of interested friends and relatives! As Keith's letter illustrates, such interested parties may not exist, as in the case of the late Derrick Stewart Baxter whose collections tragically ended up scattered to the four winds. I know of several other devoted collector-researchers whose work suffered the same fate after their demise; potentially a major loss to future generations of researchers.

At the moment, the safest course by far is for collectors to assure the future storage/protection/dissemination of their possessions/researches by inserting a codicil into their own will leaving all such materials (clearly delineated) to the National Jazz Archive at Loughton. I myself have done this, and so have a number of others, including the late critic Charles Fox, whose collection has become an important source of research at the NJA. And there's no time like the present; those interested in taking action now, or in the future, should contact: David Nathan (Archivist), National Jazz Archive, Central Library, Traps Hill, Loughton, Essex IG10 1HD or call him on 020 8502 0181.

One further point is worth making. The extensive resources of the Archive mean that any legacy is liable to contain duplicated (or even triplicated) material. It is very useful if potential legators include a note authorizing the sale of such material by the Archive as this may well allow other stocks to be acquired which are currently beyond the Archive's limited financial resources. It should also be noted that current space limitations prohibit the permanent storage of individual collections as a named entity in a bay of its own. This is a great pity, but I know of few collectors who, after due consideration, won't acknowledge the greater good that comes from the concentrated storage of unduplicated material in a (currently) small space. So please be in touch; it was a private jazz collection that indirectly prompted the discovery of Louis Armstrong's true birth-date! And what could be more important than that?

Digby Fairweather, Southend-on-Sea